



Customer Focus

The Lewis-Dickens Farm, an Audubon Society property currently used as pasture land by a local farmer, is the site of a NRCS project aimed at improving American burying beetle habitat. Since moderate grazing thwarts woody plant growth and provides small soil disturbances, both of which enhance grassland quality for the burying beetle and the birds on which they depend, Audubon wishes to maintain the land as pasture for cows. However, while the cows are generally beneficial, they have created an area of localized erosion. By making continual trips to a kettle pond, the cows have formed a gully and rainwater now flows down the gully washing both soil and manure into the pond, resulting in significant sedimentation and nitrification. Through the NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program, watering troughs, filled with water pumped from the pond, are to be erected in several locations throughout the property. Due to the remote location of these grasslands, a solar powered pump will be used to fill the watering trough. The pond will be fenced off and a diversion installed, diverting the rainwater away from the gully into vegetated areas. This will minimize further erosion of the exposed soil and allow the gully to re-vegetate, thereby restoring water quality and grassland habitat.

The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have established a population monitoring protocol. An upward trend in beetle populations has been noted in areas where habitat restoration has occurred on Block Island. Hopefully, the American burying beetle's population will expand even further as a result of improvement projects made possible through the partnering of NRCS with concerned landowners.

2004 Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Rhode Island Summary

Overview

In 2004, Rhode Island experienced a large jump in both the number of EQIP applications received and the amount of cost share funds applied for. Fortunately, with the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, we were able to meet many of those requests. Thirty-six new contracts were selected for funding from the 60 applications received, at an average cost of \$38,650 per contract. The vast majority of the contracts address livestock related concerns, such as manure storage and fencing animals out of wet areas. Several contracts also address irrigation water management systems, including the source of water, delivery of water to the field, and application of water. Many other contracts address erosion control on cropland and forestland.

Accomplishments

In total, Rhode Island has developed 12 EQIP contracts and represents \$794,534 in federal cost share assistance. Despite Rhode Island's small size, agriculture in the state is as diverse as in our neighboring states. The EQIP program addresses problems that reflect that diversity. While there are over 700 farming operations in Rhode Island, a state with just over 600,000 total acres, many of these farms are operated by producers who work full-time off of the farm. As such, NRCS has worked with its partners to develop the EQIP program in Rhode Island to meet the needs of both the full-time commercial farmers as well as the smaller "hobby" farms that are becoming more common. NRCS has benefited Rhode Island's natural resources by installing: improved irrigation systems that conserve water, alternate sources of water for large volume irrigators that enhance riparian systems; comprehensive nutrient management systems that include waste storage, land application, and fencing; and a variety of land management practices to protect water quality.

Outlook

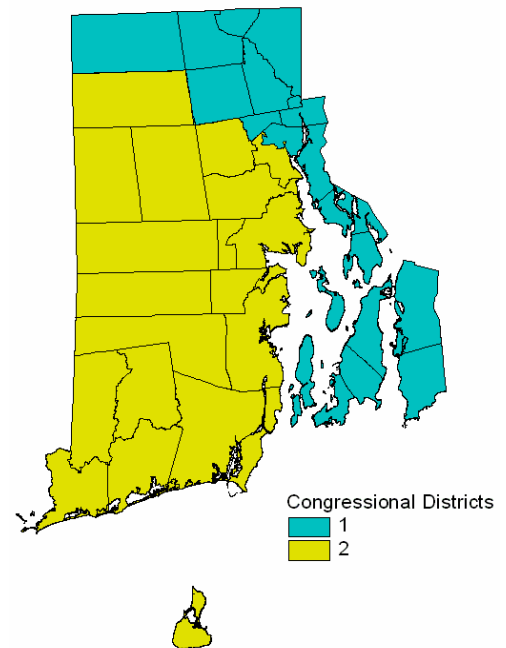
The agricultural community of Rhode Island finds it increasingly more difficult to farm in a rapidly urbanizing environment. Programs like EQIP are important tools to these farmers as they adapt to pressures of farming "on the fringe." Continued funding for EQIP in Rhode Island will help ensure their ability to farm.

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Rhode Island's EQIP Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Rhode Island EQIP Dollars and Contracts (includes inactive or cancelled contracts)

<u>Fiscal Year 2004</u>			<u>Cumulative Total (97-04)</u>	
Congressional Districts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	\$591,179	16	\$1,403,745	42
District 2	\$800,254	20	\$1,804,129	62
State Totals	\$1,391,433	36	\$3,207,874	104

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